Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

NEWSLETTER

Sesquicentennial Lafayette Sesquicentennial 1848 — 1998 150th Anniversary

President: Bill Somerton 284-9785

Lafayette, California | April, 1998 | Vol. 25, No. 2

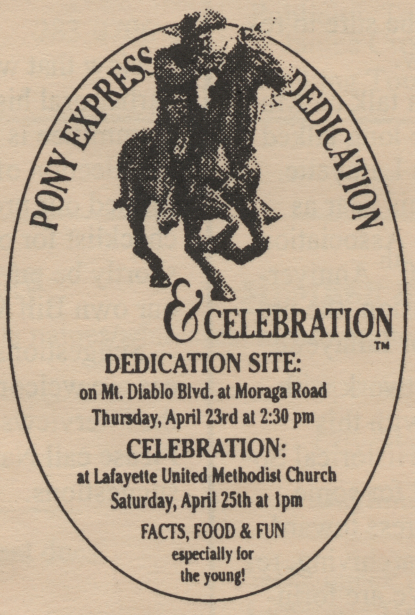
# The PONY EXPRESS in LAFAYETTE—

## a dedication, a celebration—

# And a POT LUCK TOO!

## PONY EXPRESS CELEBRATION

This event continues the year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Lafayette. It will be held on Saturday April 25th, at 1:00 PM at the Lafayette United Methodist Church. The Church is located at 955 Moraga Road, just south of Mt. Diablo Boulevard.




The Pony Express started on April 3, 1860 and lasted just over 19 months. This picturesque means of mail delivery came to an end when the transcontinental telegraph line to San Francisco was completed. Prior to the Pony Express, mail deliveries from the East took 4 to 6 weeks to reach California. The Pony Express carried the mail more than 1,900 miles in 12 to 14 days. While mail between San Francisco and Sacramento was usually sent by boat, there were many times when the Express riders missed the steamer. At those times the Pony Express continued on, riding into Lafayette for a change of horses, and then on to San Francisco.

The program will include:

- A re-enactment of the April 23rd dedication of the Pony Express monument, commemorating the time when Lafayette served as a Pony Express way station and rest stop. (The monument itself will be at the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road.)
- The presentation of essay contest prizes to the winners from among all Lafayette 4th graders who described "Why I Would Like to Have Been a Pony Express Rider".
- A presentation about this exciting era from the actual Pony Express company—Wells Fargo! Bob Chandler, Wells Fargo Bank Historian and Archivist, will share some fascinating stories with us.
- Entertainment provided by Lariat Larry, Huggs the Clown, the Town Crier, and a great musical rendition played on the Hammer Dulcimer. Balloons for the young and young at heart!

**Annual Pot Luck Dinner Meeting, May 12th—See page 2**

## LHS Annual "Pot Luck" Dinner

| | |
|---|---|
| Date: | Tuesday, May 12, 1998 |
| Time: | 6 PM Social Hour<br>7 PM Dinner, followed by a brief business meeting |
| Speakers: | Margaret De Priester, Chair, Fund Development<br>Dan Rego, Immediate Past President |
| Subject: | The Moraga Museum Experience |
| Location: | Lafayette Veterans Memorial Hall, Mt. Diablo Blvd. at 1st Street, Lafayette |
| Price: | $5.00-individual, $7.50-family (to help defray LHS expenses), plus your favorite salad or casserole |
| Questions? | Call Dick Johnson (283-0199), Keith Blakeney (284-2221), or Ollie Hamlin (283-6822) |
| **Also Appearing:** | **"Old Betsy" Fire Engine, Founder's Day Ceremony Memorabilia** |

Next to the Lafayette Sesquicentennial, this is our biggest event of the year, so be sure to reserve the date on your calendar now.

This evening's program will be a talk on Museums/Archive Buildings. We have long talked about the need for such a facility in Lafayette. The subject is particularly timely this year as the Lafayette Sesquicentennial (the Association we helped form to celebrate our 150th Anniversary) has adopted, as part of its mission, the promotion of a new library/museum for Lafayette.

With this in mind, we need to network with others who have already grappled with this awsome undertaking. The Moraga Historical Society has been working on this goal for some time and has made substantial progress toward creating a home for their historical archiving, research and educational activities We are fortunate that two members of their board have graciously offered to share their experiences with us at our Annual Dinner. Don't miss this opportunity to get the facts about the plans we are considering. We also urge all of you to become active in this endeavor.

*—by Keith Blakeney, Program Chair*

## Oral History

Now that we have created archival copies of earlier oral history interviews, the Oral History Committee is preparing to enrich Lafayette's recollection of the past even further. We have refined our procedure, in the form of a 15-item checklist for oral history interviews. It will shortly be put to the test with an interview of our own Bill Wakeman.

Suggestions for other Oral History interviewees are welcome, as are offers to help conduct the interviews and transcribe the resulting tapes. Please call Nancy Flood with your thoughts and suggestions.

*—by Nancy Flood, Oral Historian*

## REPAIRING A MODEL "T" IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

First I must report the correct spelling of the last name of members of our repair team. LEE VOLQUARDSEN is spelled with a "Q" not a "K" and JOHN KALLIO is spelled with a "K" not a "C". Regardless of how I incorrectly re-

*Please turn to* Old Betsy, *Page 5*

# Founders Day a "Wringing" Success

Yes, it was WRINGING WET on February 7th, but that didn't deter over 250 hardy souls who turned out to see the Elam Brown Monument Dedication and the Founder's Day Celebration which followed. Thanks to everyone who attended; the turnout exceeded our highest expectations, even for good weather.

This event was jointly sponsored by the LAFAYETTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY and LAFAYETTE SESQUICENTENNIAL .

The monument, dedicated by LHS, commemorates the site of the first house built by a Yankee in Lafayette. It was Elam Brown's first house here. The Monument is located on the northeast edge of Happy Valley Road, four tenths of a mile northwest of Happy Valley Elementary School. The monument was produced by Bill Somerton, Richard Johnson and Ray Peters of LHS. Diamond K Supply donated the boulder for the monument.

The program was held in the old Cosso Barn (circa 1927) behind Happy Valley School. The barn was graciously made available by Dr. John Sammann, its current owner. Music before the program was provided by Bagpiper Geoffrey Campbell and the Stanley Intermediate Ensemble, Robert Athayde, Director.

We got off to a rousing start with our new Official Town Crier, Redmond O'Colonies, followed by remarks and an invocation by Mark Wendland, Pastor of the Lafayette United Methodist Church. This church was founded by Elam Brown and the other town leaders in 1855. Next was the Presentation of the Colors by Boy Scout Troop 204.

Dedication of the monument was performed for the LHS by Vice President Nancy Flood, saying "Mayor Grodin, on behalf of the Lafayette Historical Society, I would like to present this monument to you and the City of Lafayette, on this auspicious occasion." It was accepted by Mayor Anne Grodin, responding that "...the [monument] is something special that will last for generations to come, and the community is very thankful to the Historical Society for putting the effort into this occasion." The Mayor surprised us with a City Council Proclamation declaring February 7 as Founder's Day in Lafayette, from this day forth.

Mayor Grodin also observed the need for a new library and museum and the hope that they could stand as a "...lasting monument to this historical year." She pointed out that promotion of this project for the community was part of the Lafayette Sesquicentennial mission.

Other speakers included County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema who gave an inspiring talk, stressing the importance of leaving records of what we do, so that future generations can read about and see pictures and videos of our activities, to, for instance, "...see how we dressed." Ann Denny, Executive Director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce followed Ms. Uilkema, emphasizing the Chamber's promotion of the Sesquicentennial in all its events throughout the year.

Among our special guests were all members of the Lafayette City Council and numerous descendants of Lafayette's early settlers. Highlight of the program, of course was an appearance by Elam Brown, who looked surprisingly well for his 200-some years. Mr. Brown, known to his current neighbors as Ray Peters, gave us an insightful presentation about life in his day and time.

At the conclusion of the program, a giant Anniversary Cake, donated by Lafayette Safeway, was cut by two young descendants of Elam Brown. The audience was then treated to refreshments provided by a number of local restaurants and food vendors with background music by Patrick Kelly on the Hammered Dulcimer.

Sesquicentennial souvenirs were also available including candy jars, lapel pins, license plate frames and sweatshirts, all with the Sesquicenten-

LAFAYETTE
SETTLED 1848 — INCORPORATED 1968

Sesquicentennial Lafayette Sesquicentennial 1948 1998
150th Anniversary

CITY COUNCIL
Anne Grodin, Mayor
Erling Horn, Vice Mayor
Ivor Samson
Jay Strauss
Don Tatzin

## PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the Lafayette Historical Society has located the site of the first structure built by the founding father of Lafayette, California, Elam Brown; and

WHEREAS, the City of Lafayette has designated this location as an historical site within the city, and welcomes its citizens to visit the site; and

WHEREAS, the Lafayette Historical Society has chosen to dedicate this site, one hundred fifty years after the date on which the home was erected; and

WHEREAS, on February 7, 1998, the dedication shall take place near the intersection of Upper Happy Valley and Happy Valley Road; and

WHEREAS, the dedication commemorates the founding of the city.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Lafayette City Council does hereby proclaim February 7 from this day forth, as FOUNDERS DAY in the city of Lafayette and encourages all citizens to celebrate the occasion annually.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my name and affixed the seal of the City of Lafayette this 6th day of February 1998.

Anne Grodin, Mayor

POST OFFICE BOX 1968
3675 MT. DIABLO BLVD., SUITE 210, LAFAYETTE, CA 94549-1968
TELEPHONE: (510) 284-1968 FAX: (510) 284-3169
http//:www.ci.lafayette.ca.us

City of Lafayette's Proclamation setting February 7th as Founder's Day.

nial Logo. A special and very popular souvenir was the "Pictorial Cancellation" designed by John Hopper, local publicist and graphic artist, and produced by the Lafayette Post Office under the direction of local collector, Lou Repetto.

Those who didn't attend missed a great program. Founder's Day Memorabilia will be on display at the LHS Annual Pot Luck, May 12th. Also on display will be the photo album created by Harold Waters, our professional Sesquicentennial photographer.

***—by Keith Blakeney, Event Coordinator***

## OLD BETSY—*from page 2*

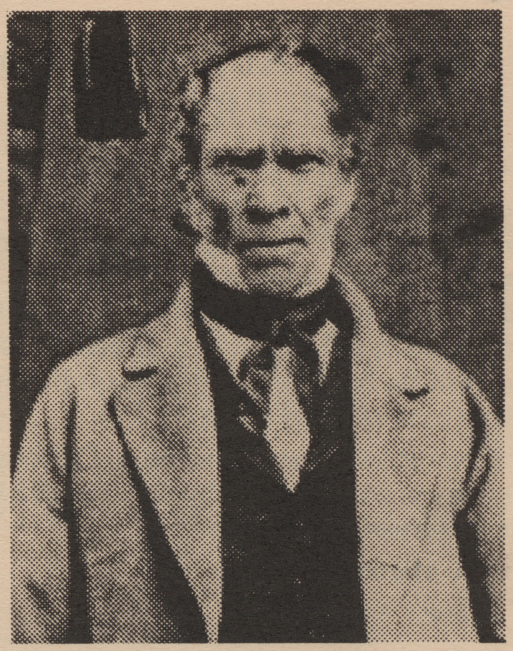
ported their last names they are WONDERFUL WORKERS!

The further part of the learning experience involves the gear box transfer case of the Worford transmission. After Lee and John did the first round of repairs it was time to do the ultimate experiment—drive the Fire Engine out of the garage. After about 20 feet of movement, the whole transmission BROKE. We think a gear tooth broke and jammed within the transfer case, that put a strain on the case and it broke. Now what to do? We decided to take the transmission out and replace the drive shaft with a longer shaft. That involved taking the rear axle off to get to the drive shaft. We've learned how to do that now.

All is not just bad news—with the axle off they could reline the rear brakes and replace the grease seals. That is all done now.

The Fire Engine will be ready for the Pony Express Monument dedication on April 23, the Pony Express Celebration on April 25 and the Pot Luck dinner on May 12.

***—by George Wasson, Keeper of the Fire Engine***



Elam Brown. Photo from the Lafayette Historical Society Archives.

Elam Brown, as portrayed by LHS member Ray Peters, February 7, 1998. Photo courtesy Gary Willcuts

## Book Signing

Dave Simpson, historically-minded owner of The Lafayette Book Store (near Tourelle), invites members of LHS to attend a signing by Ray Peters of his historical novel THE LAFITTE CASE. Come immediately after the Pony Express Celebration on April 25.

# KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS,

That I, Richard B. Mason, Colonel 1st Regiment of Dragoons, United States Army and Governor of California, by virtue of authority in me vested, do hereby appoint ELAM BROWN an Alcalde for the section of country lying along the Contra Costa and embracing the settlements in the valley of the San Joaquin, (replacing) Estudillo whose term of office has expired.

Given at Monterey the capital of California this 30th day of March 1848, and the 72nd year of the Independence of the States.

R.B. Mason

Colonel, 1st Dragoons

Governor of California

On April 18, 1848, Brown appeared personally in the Chief Magistrates' Office, District of San Francisco, and took the oath of office as Alcalde.

***—(As noted in 'Some California Poppies,' Dorothy Mutnick), extracted by Ray Peters***

# Board of Directors Actions

**September 9, 1997 meeting—**

Keith Blakeney described the organization and goals of the Sesquicentennial Committee, founded by LHS, the Chamber of Commerce and the City.

Ray Peters was asked to identify a site for a plaque for the original Elam Brown homesite.

**September 23, 1997 Special Meeting—**

Voted to commit to a $2,000 contribution to the Sesquicentennial Celebration, to be paid in installments.

Board voted to combine its efforts with those of the Friends of the Lafayette Library towards the construction of a new library with a room dedicated as a museum of Lafayette history.

**November 11, 1997 meeting—**

Heard an update from Keith Blakeney about Sesquicentennial plans, and voted to endorse the plans as outlined.

Discussed plans for the Elam Brown Monument installation and dedication, and commended Ray Peters for his research on the project.

Discussed the possibility of publishing an updated history of the city, and the possibility of reprinting Andrew Young's *The Improvers*.

**January 13, 1998 meeting—**

Approved transferring funds from one maturing certificate of deposit, raising the Fern Powell Davis fund to $10,000 so that it can receive a higher rate of interest.

Heard report of Lafayette School District and LASF efforts to improve 3rd grade studies of Lafayette history, including Emily Haas' project to recast *Lafayette—A Pictorial History* to a 3rd grader's reading level. Approved her reproduction of photos from LHS archives for the project, and the purchase of the Elam Brown costume for Ray Peters' participation.

Heard report of Sesquicentennial planning, including the work of member Dick Johnson in mounting the Elam Brown homesite plaque. Approved expenditure of $200 towards the Pony Express monument.

**March 10, 1998 meeting—**

Heard report from Chamber of Commerce regarding plans for Art and Wine Festival in September, a Sesquicentennial event, and agreed to coordinate walking tours of Lafayette during the Festival with the Chamber.

Heard proposals for widening Moraga Road at Mt. Diablo Blvd. to provide an additional right turn lane from City Manager Steve Falk. This would require taking 6 feet of land from Plaza Park on the west side. Approved a proposal to allow this in exchange for closing Plaza Way to traffic, realigning Golden Gate Way to add land to the park on the east side, improve sidewalks in front of the historic buildings and make it possible to restore the historic fronts of the buildings, and purchase additional off-street parking nearby.

Approved a plaque at Jennie Bickerstaff's redwood tree, to be contributed by Ed Stokes.

# 1997/98 Board of Directors and Committee Chairs

## Board of Directors

Bill Somerton, President . . 284-9785
Nancy Flood, Vice President . . 283-3409
Paul Sheehan, Treasurer . . . 284-1287
Ruth Dyer, Recording Secretary . . . . 283-8312
Oliver Hamlin, Corresponding Secretary . . 283-6822
Keith Blakeney . . . . . 284-2221
Marechal Duncan . . . . . 283-6812
Ray Peters . . . . . 283-5256
Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus . 299-2030
Joseph Van Overveen . . . . 283-3650
Bill Wakeman . . . . . 283-3908
Gary Willcuts . . . . . 283-0706

## Committee Chairs

Annual Potluck Dinner, Richard Johnson . . . . . 283-0199
Archives & Historical Displays, Bill Somerton . . . . . 284-9785
Book Sales, Ruth Dyer . . . 283-8312
Community Relations, Marechal Duncan . . . . 283-6812
Fire Engine, George Wasson . 284-4603
Historian, Bill Wakeman . . . 283-3908
LHS Online, (vacant) . . . . . .
Membership, Oliver Hamlin . 284-1446
Newsletter, Gary Willcuts . . 283-0706
Newsletter Mailing, James Sturman . . . . . ~~283-1250~~ 932-7620
Oral Historian, Nancy Flood . 283-3409
Plaza Park, Ray Peters . . . 283-5256
Programs, Keith Blakeney . . 284-2221
Publicity, Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus . . . 299-2030
Walking Tours, Bill Wakeman 283-3908

Cut here

## Lafayette Historical Society

### MEMBER INFORMATION

(For multiple names/addresses, please photocopy this form.)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Daytime phone: _____

Membership Categories and annual dues (please check one):

_____ Student membership $ 2.50
_____ Family membership $ 10.00
_____ Business membership $ 50.00
_____ Life membership $100.00

Make check payable to **Lafayette Historical Society** and mail to P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

DUES $_____
Fire engine maintenance $_____
Sesquicentennial $_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED $_____

**Please indicate your areas of special interest:**

_____ Sesquicentennial
_____ Annual Dinner Committee
_____ Displays
_____ Newpaper Clippings
_____ Programs & Trips
_____ Walking Tours
_____ Archives
_____ Fire Engine
_____ Oral History
_____ Research
_____ Other _____
_____ LHS Online/Computers
_____ Landmarks
_____ Photograph Collection
_____ Telephone Committee

# LHS and SESQUICENTENNIAL CALENDAR

***Pony Express Dedication***

| | |
|---|---|
| Date/Time | Thursday, April 23, 1998, 2:30 pm, Dedication |
| Place | Mt. Diablo Blvd. at Moraga Rd. |
| Speaker | Joe Nardone, Western Trails Association |

***Pony Express Celebration***

| | |
|---|---|
| Date/Time | Saturday, April 25, 1998, 1 pm,Celebration |
| Place | United Methodist Church on Moraga Rd. |

***Annual Pot-Luck Dinner and Program***

| | |
|---|---|
| Date | Tuesday, May 12, 1998 |
| Place | Lafayette Vetrans Memorial Hall |

***Concours d'Elegance***

| | |
|---|---|
| Date | Sunday, July 12, 1998 |
| Place | Acalanes High School |

***Art and Wine Festival***

| | |
|---|---|
| Dates | September 19th and 20th |
| Place | Downtown Lafayette |

For information on membership, contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.

**Lafayette Historical Society**
POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE CALIF.

***First Class Mail***

***Address Correction Requested***
***Return Postage Guaranteed***